

PHIL 352: Philosophy and the Arts

Fall 2009

TR 1:35-2:50, UNH 3320

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Shannon Nason

OFFICE: UNH 3635

OFFICE HOURS: M 2:00-3:30, TR 8:30-10:00, 3:00-4:30

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Course Description

This upper division course is on the *philosophy* of art, and not a course in art history or on the techniques of art. We will survey a variety of philosophical and systematic theories of art from classical times to the present, and will consider particular artworks that seem to be explicitly or implicitly paradigmatic examples of these theories. Theories surveyed will include “realism” (Plato, Aristotle), expressionism and cognitivism (Tolstoy, Collingwood), empiricism (Hume) “formalism” (Kant), the ontology, hermeneutics, and phenomenology of art (Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty), and “postmodernism” (Foucault, Deleuze). Some of the debates within these aesthetic theories that we will actively and responsibly consider involve: the definition(s) of art, the relationship between art and nature, the question of taste and aesthetic judgment, the nature of sensation, the function and problems associated with the philosophical theory of “representation” questioned by both artists (various movements in modern abstract art, including the art of Piet Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, and Francis Bacon, and to some extent Paul Cézanne) and philosophers (e.g., Foucault, Deleuze), and the status of “popular” and kitsch art. Our focus will be primarily on the *visual* arts (such as painting and photography), though we will also have occasion to consider other media such as literature, music, theater, and architecture. The aim of the course is to introduce students to the *philosophical* problems posed by the various arts, and the ways these problems have been discussed and analyzed (though rarely resolved) in the philosophical tradition.

Student Learning Outcomes

Regular attendance and participation, thoughtful engagement with the readings, and thorough completion of assignments should allow students to:

1. Gain an understanding of key areas of the philosophical relevance of art and aesthetics
2. Develop and enhance critical, interpretive, and analytical skills central to the study of philosophy and other disciplines.
3. Develop an appreciation of historical movements in the philosophy of art and aesthetics
4. Develop and enhance tools for close reading and concise writing in a philosophical and critical manner.
5. Engage and enjoy your community of colleagues in discussion, both inside and outside the classroom setting.

Prerequisites/Recommended Background

This upper-level philosophy course is designed for both majors in philosophy and non-majors with some background in philosophy. It is recommended, but not required, that students have taken some philosophy classes and are relatively familiar with philosophical terminology. Perhaps in more cases than not, some familiarity with philosophy will be more valuable than familiarity with the history of art or various techniques of art. That said, more knowledge of the latter than the former should not in any way deter a student from taking this course.

Required Texts

Stephen David Ross, ed., *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*

Terry Barrett, *Why is that Art?*

Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*

Course Requirements

Course Journals 60%

Final Paper 30%

Preparation, Attendance, Participation 10%

NOTES:

- (a) **Course Journals:** I will routinely assign expository and reflection papers that you will type and print out to keep in a journal (folders only; no three-ring binders, please). One of the best ways to cultivate a clear understanding of these very difficult texts is to engage in expository and reflective writing; that is, your journals should not aim for overly ambitious arguments or to solve big philosophical problems. I will collect these journals twice over the course of the semester (October 20 and December 3). Your journal entries should be *no more than five pages double-spaced and no less than three and half pages double-spaced*. Each journal entry should have the following format: (1) a short introduction that clearly states the topic, (2) a detailed interpretation/summary (in your own words with a limited amount of quotes) of a key argument in your reading, (3) a considered reflection (an objection or a series of thoughtful questions) generated by your understanding of the argument, and (4) a conclusion. Each of the two journal collections will count for 30% of your final grade. Since I will allow you to revise selections of your journal for inclusion in your final paper, those of you who work hard on the journal stand to reap significant rewards. Journal collections that are missing or incomplete on the due dates will be marked down significantly, so please manage your time wisely. **Please bring your entries to class so that you can refer to them in class discussion.**
- (b) **Final Paper:** The final paper will be a longer (around 10-15 page) paper on a subject of your choice. Your paper should have a clearly articulated thesis, should utilize good philosophical research by engaging secondary sources on your topic, and also should have a sustained and clear philosophical argument. I will distribute a recommended bibliography of secondary and primary sources in due time, and I will also point you in the right direction to finding peer-reviewed scholarship in philosophical aesthetics. Stay tuned for more information about the final paper.
- (c) **Preparation, Attendance, Participation (PAP):** (1) Preparing for class is essential in this course. **Please read all reading assignments before class and come prepared to discuss, ask questions, and elaborate on them.** Your journals should facilitate active engagement on this score. If you come having responsibly and critically read the assignments you will know what everyone is talking about (even if what you read and wrote isn't all that clear to you). (2) **Please come to class every day.** Much of the material is extremely difficult and to make any sense of it, you will need regular input from me and your colleagues. I will not take attendance, but regular absences will be detrimental to your understanding of the material. (3) Philosophy is an activity, and therefore cannot be done passively. **Please come to class ready to roll up your sleeves and do philosophy.**

PAP is worth 10% of your grade. Your overall grade will be affected by the following scoring rubric (developed by Dr. Brad Stone) based on preparation and participation:

Interlocutor (no deduction): student is dependably prepared and a strong contributor to class discussion

Novice (-3 % of overall grade): student is prepared and a generous contributor to class discussion

Student (-6% of overall grade): student normally attends class but does not strongly contribute to class, often due to lack of preparation

Zombie (-10% of overall grade): student is rarely present or *only* bodily present for the semester

Quantitative Grading Scale

A	100-95
A-	94-90
B+	89-86
B	85-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-76
C	75-73
C-	72-70
D	69-65
F	64 and under

Qualitative Grading Scale

A: a mark of *true excellence*. A level work shows a complete grasp of the material, shows facility and creativity with philosophical reasoning and critical thinking skills.

B+ -- A- : a mark for very good work. B+ to A- level work evinces quite a good grasp of the material and ability to reason and engage with the material clearly and effectively.

B: a mark of good or above average work. B level work engages the material at an above average level and shows a fairly decent understanding of the philosophical views and problems at issue but does not engage the material with completeness, clarity, facility, or creativity.

C – B- : marks of satisfactory and average work. C- to B- level work shows a basic ability to engage with the material by regurgitating and reproducing factual information. C- to B- performance is proof that the student has not really digested the information to make it his or her own.

D: a mark of *merely* passing work. A mark of D indicates that the student has completed minimal requirements for the assignment in question, but has produced work that is not satisfactory. That is, D level work is more often than not done very badly (includes falsehoods about information, lacks reasoning (good or bad) altogether, and shows proof that barely effort was made).

F: a mark of failing work. F level work indicates “work” that does not meet minimal standards for acceptable university work. In addition, any work that fails to meet the requirements for an assignment—e.g., work turned in late, work turned in via email, plagiarized work, work that ignores the criteria of the prompt—will receive a failing grade.

Incompletes

Determining the appropriateness of an incomplete will be based on student-instructor consultation well before the end of the semester. I do not accept requests for incompletes shortly before or after the final exam. Moreover, incompletes will not be granted to those students who would have to repeat the course in order to pass; that is, incompletes will not be given to those students who are failing. In addition, incompletes will be granted to those students who have successfully completed 80% of coursework. For the University’s regulations regarding incompletes, please see page 57 of the Loyola Marymount University Bulletin or at <http://www.lmu.edu/Page13322.aspx>.

Writing Deadlines and Submissions

I do not accept late work and I don’t give extra credit. You are expected to submit assignments by the deadlines listed. All written work is due by the **beginning** of class. (**I do not accept emailed papers.**) In order to be considered for a grade, all assignments are to be complete, of the minimum pages, word-processed, 12 point legible font (preferably Times New Roman), and with one inch margins. No out of class papers will be accepted if they are handwritten. Late assignments will only be accepted with the specific, prior agreement of the instructor. No exceptions!!!

Academic Integrity

All written work submitted for a grade in this course must be the product of your own composition. Ideas generated due to reading and group discussion may provide the inspiration for your work, but should not be the sole ideas

represented. That said, there is no reason why you would need to consult online or offline sources other than the ones that I recommend.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as your own work another individual’s ideas, words, data, or research material. The concept applies equally to written, spoken, or electronic texts, published or unpublished. All ideas and quotations that you borrow from any source must be acknowledged: at a minimum, you should give the name of your author, the title of the text cited, and the page number(s) of the citation. The only exceptions to this requirement would involve what is familiar and commonly held (e.g. the fact that the earth is round). You should know that penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and can entail suspension from the University, in addition to receiving a failing grade on the plagiarized assignment as well as failing grade for the course. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the University policy on academic dishonest set forth in Loyola Marymount University’s “Honor Code and Process” on pages 24-27 of *Community Standards* (2008-2009) and at <http://www.lmu.edu/Page13245.aspx>

Classroom Behavior

Classroom behavior should strictly be in line with Loyola Marymount University’s Lion’s Code. In summary, student behavior in the classroom should be respectful of self and others. Thus, insults, slurs, or attacks of any kind will not be tolerated in this class. Any student who engages in this type of behavior in the classroom will be permanently removed from the class. In order to have an effective teaching and learning environment we must practice both respect and tolerance, without question. Please see pages 6-7 of *Community Standards* (2008-2009) or <http://www.lmu.edu/AssetFactory.aspx?vid=30313>.

Also, I expect that when students come to class that they stay in class. Please take care of whatever business you need to take care of before entering the classroom. Getting up, leaving, and then re-entering the classroom while class is in session is rude and interrupts the flow of the class. So, please don’t do this, unless there is an emergency.

Computers, Phones, etc...

Computers are not allowed in this class. Furthermore, please make sure you turn off and **put away** your cell phones, pagers, etc. before class begins. It is essential to maintain an interruption-free learning environment. I know this may seem harsh, but if I see a cell phone or other electronic device on your desk, on your lap, “hiding” in your purse that is on your lap, or being used by you in any fashion whatsoever **you will lose ALL PAP points for the semester**. So, if you are getting a solid A in the course, but I see a cell phone on your desk, on your lap, or “hiding” in your purse that is on your lap, or is being used by you in some fashion, the most you can get in the course is a B-.

Course Calendar The instructor reserves the right to change the following calendar to suit the needs of the class.

9/1	Introductions, Syllabus, etc.	
9/3	Barrett, (pp. 1-15); Comments on Andres Serrano by Members of the United States Senate (Handout)	Briefly answer the discussion questions at the end of the Serrano handout.
9/8 Ancient Greek “Aesthetics”	Plato, <i>Republic</i> (Ross, pp. 9-44)	
9/10	Plato, <i>Ion</i> and <i>Symposium</i> (Ross, pp. 45-64)	Journal Assignment #1: Plato and the artists. Utilize all three texts by Plato
9/15	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> and <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Ross, pp. 65-76); Barrett (pp. 17-55)	
9/17	Dr. Nason out of town—No Class	
9/22 Expressivism and Cognitivism	Tolstoy, “What is Art?” (Ross, pp. 177-184); Collingwood, <i>Principles of Art</i> (Ross, pp. 192-201)	
9/24	Collingwood, cont.; Barrett (pp. 57-76; 87-103)	Journal Assignment #2: Art, Feeling, Knowledge of Self: Expressivism and Cognitivism

9/29 Empirical Approach to Aesthetic Judgment	Hume, <i>Of the Standard of Taste</i> (Ross, pp. 77-92)	
10/1	Hume, cont.	Journal Assignment #3: Hume's Search for a Standard of Taste: Sentiment and Perception
10/6 Kantian Solution to Aesthetic Judgment	Kant, <i>The Critique of Judgment</i> (Ross, pp. 95-113)	
10/8	Kant, <i>The Critique of Judgment</i> (Ross, pp. 113-138)	Journal Assignment #4: The Formal Properties of the Judgment of Taste: Kant's Four "Moments"
10/13	Kant, cont.; Barrett (107-124, 139-145)	
10/15	Kant, cont.	
10/20 Ontological and Phenomenological Approach to Art	Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art" (Ross, pp. 253-280)	JOURNAL DUE
10/22	Heidegger, cont.	
10/27	Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" (Ross, pp. 281-298)	
11/3	Merleau-Ponty, cont.	Journal Assignment #5: Art, Truth, Being, and Perception: Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Choose one of these philosophers
11/5 Interpretation and Criticism of Art: Problems Posed to Modern Theories of Aesthetic Judgment	Gadamer, <i>Truth and Method</i> (Ross, pp. 349-382)	
11/10	Gadamer, cont.	Journal Assignment #6: The Historical Characteristic of Art and our Hermeneutical Task
11/12	Foucault, <i>The Order of Things</i> (Ross, pp. 439-456)	
11/17	Foucault, cont.	
11/19 Philosophy of Painting: Non-Representationalism and Sensation (A Case Study)	Deleuze (pp. vii-xxxiii, 3-18)	Journal Assignment #7: Foucault's Interpretation of Las Meninas: "The representation of Classical representation"
11/24	Deleuze (pp. 19-38)	
11/26	Thanksgiving—No Class	
12/1	Deleuze (pp. 39-54, 71-98)	Journal Assignment #8: Figurations, Narrations, Figures, and Forces: Deleuze and Bacon on painting sensations
12/3	Deleuze (pp. 99-115)	JOURNAL DUE
12/8	Catch up day	
12/10	Catch up day	FINAL PAPER DUE